

CLAIMS

1. A system for facilitating communications between a specifier and one or more suppliers, said system comprising:

- a) a server in communication with a plurality of client workstations,
- 5 b) a storage medium associated with said server for receiving and storing parameters communicated from a specifier workstation related to an e-palette,
- c) a processor associated with said server and in communication with said storage medium and with programming that operates with said processor:
 - 10 i) to monitor communications to said server from said plurality of client workstations related to said e-palette; and
 - ii) to automatically communicate the existence of a communication related to said e-palette from one of said plurality of client workstations to said specifier workstation.

15 2. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said programming further operates with said processor to automatically communicate to said plurality of client workstations the existence of a communication from said specifier workstation related to said e-palette.

20 3. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said server communicates with said plurality of client workstations across a computer network.

4. A system according to Claim 3, wherein said computer network is selected from a group consisting of a local area network, a wide area network, an intranet, the Internet and a combination thereof.

5. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said storage medium includes a database that is configured to receive and store said parameters related to said e-palette.

6. A system according to Claim 5, wherein said parameters related to said e-palette are selected from a group consisting of colorimetric data, spectral data, reflectance data, transmission data, illuminant data, image map, texture map and combinations thereof.

5 7. A system according to Claim 5, wherein said parameters related to said e-palette include information unrelated to color selected from a group consisting of a predetermined set of suppliers, supplier submission condition, supplier response 10 timeframe, cost data, and combinations thereof.

8. A system according to Claim 1, further comprising a color measurement device in communication with at least one of said plurality of client workstations, said color measurement device being configured to measure at least one of said plurality of parameters related to said e-palette.

15 9. A system according to Claim 8, wherein said at least one of said plurality of client workstations is in communication with profiling programming that profiles operative performance of said color measurement device.

10. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said programming further operates with said processor to support administrative functionality accessible by a 20 specifier from said specifier workstation.

11. A system according to Claim 10, wherein said administrative functionality provides said specifier with an ability to define predetermined sets of suppliers for subsequent communication in connection with an e-palette defined by said specifier.

12. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said programming further operates with said processor to support reporting functionality accessible by a specifier from said specifier workstation.

13. A system according to Claim 12, wherein said reporting functionality provides said specifier with an ability to access reports associated with e-palette communications selected from a group consisting of detailed reports, summary reports and supplier reports.

14. A system according to Claim 1, wherein said communication between said server and said plurality of client workstations utilizes CxF language protocols.

10 15. A method for facilitating communications between a specifier and one or more suppliers, said method comprising:

- a) receiving an e-palette across a computer network at a server, said e-palette originating from a specifier workstation and including parameters related to said e-palette, said parameters including a predetermined set of suppliers associated with said e-palette by said specifier;
- b) automatically communicating to said predetermined set of suppliers the existence of said e-palette at said server; and
- c) permitting remote access to said e-palette by said predetermined set of suppliers at said server.

20 16. A method according to Claim 15, wherein said parameters further include color information selected from a group consisting of colorimetric data, spectral data, reflectance data, transmission data, illuminant data, image map, texture map and combinations thereof, and information unrelated to color selected from a group consisting

of supplier submission condition, supplier response timeframe, cost data, and combinations thereof.

17. A method according to Claim 15, wherein said method further comprises:

- a) receiving at said server a submission from at least one of said predetermined set of suppliers in response to said e-palette; and
- b) automatically communicating to said specifier the existence of said submission by said at least one of said predetermined set of suppliers at said server.

18. A method according to Claim 17, that further comprises facilitating

10 iterative communications between said specifier and said at least one of said predetermined set of suppliers related to said e-palette.

19. A method according to Claim 18, further comprising:

- a) storing information related to said iterative communications in a database associated with said server; and
- b) providing reporting functionality related to said iterative communications between said specifier and said at least one of said predetermined set of suppliers.

20. A method according to Claim 15, that further comprises restricting access to information stored at said server to pre-approved entities.

21. A method according to Claim 15, that further comprises automatically validating operation of color measuring equipment involved in measuring color attributes associated with an e-palette received at said server.

22. A system for facilitating communications between a specifier and one or more suppliers, said system comprising:

- a) a server in communication with a plurality of client workstations and adapted to receive e-palette information;
- 5 b) a processor associated with said server that includes programming for limiting access to and controlling integrity of said e-palette information; and
- c) a storage medium associated with said server for receiving and storing said e-palette information,

10 wherein said e-palette information includes parameters communicated to said server by a specifier and at least one responsive e-palette submission communicated to said server by a supplier.

23. A system according to Claim 22, wherein said e-palette information includes color information selected from a group consisting of colorimetric data, spectral data, reflectance data, transmission data, illuminant data, image map, texture map and combinations thereof, and information unrelated to color selected from a group consisting of a predetermined set of suppliers, supplier submission condition, supplier response timeframe, cost data, and combinations thereof.

24. A system according to Claim 22, wherein said at least one responsive e-

20 palette submission is accessible only to said specifier.